



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

I was thrilled to see so many of our colleagues in attendance at last week's Arizona Tourism Unity Dinner. The event brought together both public and private tourism industry organizations and elected officials from across the state to celebrate unity within the tourism trade. Karen Churchard with the Arizona Tourism Alliance (ATA) and her dedicated committee members put on a fantastic event, with the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa serving as the perfect backdrop and *Arizona Highways* Publisher Win Holden keeping the audience entertained with his excellent emceeing skills.

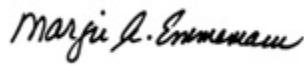
The event is a major fundraiser for ATA, but also honors individuals for their extraordinary support and service to Arizona's travel and tourism industry. This year, John Junker, president and CEO of the Tostitos Fiesta Bowl was honored as "Tourism Advocate of the Year." Since the Fiesta Bowl's first game at Sun Devil Stadium in 1971, the event has attracted more than one million out-of-state visitors and generated more than \$1 billion for Arizona's economy. He also played a key role in entering the Fiesta Bowl into the Bowl Championship Series which set up an unprecedented three bowl games in 11 days— the Insight Bowl, Tostitos Fiesta Bowl and BCS National Championship Game – in the 2006-07 bowl season. Those three bowls brought in 200,000 out-of-state visitors to the state and has an estimated economic impact of \$315 million.

AOT also had the opportunity to present Robin Sewell with a "Tourism Champion of the Year" award for her contribution's to Arizona's tourism industry through the highly-acclaimed Arizona Highways Television program. Now in its third season, Arizona Highways Television has traversed the Grand Canyon State, seeking out the hidden treasures and casting a new light on the treasures we all know and love. I couldn't imagine a better marketing tool to get Arizona residents inspired to explore their own state.

Rachel Sacco, President & CEO of the Scottsdale CVB also presented a "Tourism Champion of the Year" award to Richard Bibee, General Manager of the Renaissance Scottsdale Resort and president of the Scottsdale CVB Board.

Congratulations to all of the award recipients and thank you for supporting Arizona tourism!

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

AOT Launches Geotourism MapGuide

The Arizona Office of Tourism launched the National Geographic Arizona-Sonora Desert Region Geotourism MapGuide in Tubac last week. The MapGuide showcases more than 80 geotourism locations within the Arizona-Sonora Desert. The launch was held at the Tubac Center for the Arts during the city's Art Walk event and more than 200 people were in attendance. The annual celebration of arts was a perfect venue to highlight one of the many unique Sonoran desert experiences that is on the MapGuide. Representatives from AOT, the Sonora Office of Tourism, the Sonoran Institute and the Bureau of Land Management were on hand to speak about their innovative partnership with National Geographic on the organization's first bi-national geotourism project. About 10 representatives from geotourism locations were also present to see their accommodations, museums, restaurants and state parks on the MapGuide for the first time. The MapGuide is the first step in AOT's plans to promote geotourism. AOT is launching a campaign called Arizona Origins, and the first step is an interactive Web site that highlights many of the geotourism sites not incorporated on the hard copy of the guide. The new Arizona Origins site is accessible from AOT's consumer Web site at www.ArizonaGuide.com. To ensure broad application of geotourism concepts throughout the state, AOT has also developed educational workshops to help educate communities in Arizona on the principles and values of geotourism that will help them better market their assets. Dates for the workshops are listed in the news brief below. A limited amount of guides will be available at visitor centers throughout southern Arizona, and can be ordered online at www.ArizonaGuide.com.

Arizona Tourism University Presents Geotourism Workshop Series

Please mark your calendars for AOT's newest workshop series featuring "Geotourism." The workshops will focus on Geotourism and how Arizona and its new Arizona Origins initiative will apply and market these important principals. Learn how Arizona and its southern neighbor Sonora are bringing increased attention to the state's unique Geotourism assets through the new Arizona Sonora Desert Geotourism MapGuide which is a cooperative effort with *National Geographic*. The workshops will focus on how you can use these concepts and principles and

integrate them into your marketing and product development programs. To register for a workshop please contact Sarah Martins at smartins@azot.gov or by phone at 602-364-3687.

April 3, 2007
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Tohono Chul Park
7366 North Paseo Del Norte
Tucson, AZ 85704

April 4, 2007
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Bisbee Convention center
#2 Copper Queen Plaza
Bisbee, AZ 85603

Requesting Calendar of Event Information

The Arizona Office of Tourism is requesting event information to be considered for the calendar of events posted at www.ArizonaGuide.com. The calendar is currently updated with events through July 2007. We would like to receive information for events that occur through December 2007 and major events of 2008. Events to be considered must be open to the public and of interest to participants or spectators from neighboring communities across Arizona or from out of state. Submissions should include the date, including the year; community in which the event takes place, name of event; venue; venue address; description; admission, event time; phone number and/or Web site for the public to obtain additional information. Please include your contact information so that we may reach you with any questions we may have prior to posting your event. Photography to accompany any event listing is encouraged, (images should be a minimum of 300 DPI at 4"x5" original size) and we can supply you with an image information form. Additional events through July 2007 may also be submitted immediately if the event is not already posted. Please check the Web site to see if your event is already included. If you have questions or would like an event submission form, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at Mmagnusson@azot.gov or by phone at 602-364-3695 or fax at 602-364-3702.

Trippin' with AOT

New Arizona Road Show Reaches Out to Mexican Travel Market

The Arizona Office of Tourism will target Mexican tour operators and travel agents at the first Arizona Road Show. AOT plans to make the Road Show an annual event. This year, the Arizona Road Show will be held in Mexico City and Guadalajara from May 28 – June 1, 2007. The Road Show will highlight a prominent guest speaker, destination seminars and tour operator sales calls. Registration cost is \$1,995 per delegate and includes two nights accommodation in Mexico City and two nights accommodation in Guadalajara. For more information please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at kswanson@azot.gov.

Arizona Represented at Go West Summit

AOT attended the Go West Summit in Portland, Oregon from February 12 -15, 2007. Go West is an annual seminar and marketplace for tour operators and Western States regional tourism suppliers. There were approximately 80 operators from Europe, Latin America and Asia in attendance, in addition to many US based receptive operators. The three-day event comprised of

seminars and guest speakers, along with two days of pre-scheduled 15 minute appointments with the tour operators to review both their current and potential Arizona product. For more information or a copy of the report, please contact Hylton Fothergill at 602-364-3706 or via e-mail at hfothergill@azot.gov.

Industry News

Travel Industry Seek Action on Passport Delays

With a growing number of U.S. travelers seeking new passports--and many waiting 10 weeks or more before they receive the documents, the travel industry is seeking a meeting with the State Department, which it believes needs additional resources to keep up with the demand. Earlier this month, the State Department said that travelers applying for U.S. passports may have to wait as long as two-and-a-half months for routine processing. Travelers paying for expedited processing should expect a four-week wait. The agency said the number of passport applications this year is significantly higher due to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, which requires airline passengers entering the U.S. to possess a valid passport. (*Special to TA; Travel Weekly.com, 3/23; Modern Agent.com, 3/23; Page 2B, USA Today*)

Now Opening: 800 New Hotels

Starting this spring, the U.S. hotel industry will unleash an unusually large crop of new properties. Some of the most distinctive--and luxurious-- are opening in places that might not be on some travelers' short list of vacation spots. In all, more than two-thirds of the top 30 fastest-growing hotel destinations are outside the country's biggest cities. The boom--more than 800 new hotels are opening this year--reflects the completion of projects that were greenlighted when the post 9/11 travel slump started to improve. But hotel chains say that with high occupancy levels they won't be offering opening deals. (*Page P3, Wall Street Journal, 3/24-25*).

Air Fares Rose 7 Percent in 2006, AMEX Says

Air passengers paid an average of 7.2 percent more for domestic flights in 2006, while international flights, on average, cost 5.8 percent more than in 2005, according to an annual study published by American Express Business Travel. While ticket prices for international flights reached record levels in 2006, the average domestic flight was still cheaper than in 2000, prior to the downturn in the U.S. airline industry. In 2006, the average price for a domestic ticket was \$231, less than the \$259 average ticket price in 2000. During 2006, average domestic fares fell from a high of \$247 in the second quarter to \$216 in the fourth quarter. The average international fare was \$1,707 in 2006, up from \$1,468 in 2000.

National Park Service Wants Suggestions for 100th Birthday Celebration

The National Park Service is holding a series of community "listening sessions" around the country to gather suggestions on the observation of the service's 100 birthday in 2016 and plans to prepare national parks for the future. The first session was held in eastern Tennessee, near the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. During the next three weeks, sessions will be held at the Grand Canyon, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, and in Flagstaff, Ariz. (*Special to TA*)

Florida Looks for More Funding

Visit Florida, the state's tourism agency, wants the state Legislature to more than double its annual funding, arguing that the increase would more than pay for itself through increased sales-tax revenue. Visit Florida, which receives both public and private funding to promote travel to the state, said other destinations are spending more money on tourist development. The agency wants

the Legislature to give it \$59 million--a 139% increase over its current allocation of \$24.7 million. (*Orlando Sentinel.com/Business*)